

HOUSE BILL 801

By Pitts

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4; Title 49, Chapter 7; Title 49, Chapter 8 and Title 49, Chapter 9, relative to creating the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 9, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

(a) To be eligible for a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, a student shall:

- (1) Not be ineligible for the scholarship under § 49-4-904;
- (2) Have been a Tennessee resident, as defined by regulations promulgated by the board of regents under § 49-8-104, for one (1) year immediately preceding the date of application for the scholarship or the renewal of the scholarship;
- (3) Not have been enrolled in or attended any postsecondary institution for at least twelve (12) months immediately preceding the date of application for the scholarship;
- (4) Be within sixty (60) semester hours of obtaining a baccalaureate degree;
- (5) For the 2015-2016 academic year, be admitted to and enroll in an eligible four-year postsecondary institution;
- (6) File the FAFSA;

(7) Apply for the scholarship by filing a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future application as required by TSAC;

(8) Provide transcripts to the eligible postsecondary institution in which the student intends to enroll within five (5) business days after submission of the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future application required under subdivision (a)(7); and

(9) Seek all nonrepayable, nonlottery postsecondary financial assistance for which the student is eligible as determined by the eligible postsecondary institution's financial aid office.

(b)

(1) Before TSAC may award a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, the student and the eligible postsecondary institution in which the student intends to enroll shall examine the student's past postsecondary coursework and determine that the student has already earned sufficient credits toward the degree sought to enable the student to complete a baccalaureate degree by earning an additional sixty (60) or fewer semester hours of credit at the institution.

(2) The student and the eligible postsecondary institution in which the student intends to enroll shall establish a degree plan by which the student who is within sixty (60) semester hours of a baccalaureate degree shall be able to obtain the baccalaureate degree. The plan shall specify the courses that the student must take to obtain the degree, the semesters in which those courses will be offered, and the length of time that will be required to obtain the degree. The plan shall not require more than sixty (60) semester hours. The plan shall set the time required for the student to obtain a baccalaureate degree at no more than two (2) calendar years. In establishing the degree plan, the institution shall strive

to enable the student to complete the degree sought in the shortest time possible and with the fewest number of semester hours.

(3) The student shall agree to enroll in at least fifteen (15) semester hours per semester during any fall or spring semester. The student may enroll in fewer than fifteen (15) semester hours in a summer or interim semester. In the last semester of attendance before obtaining the degree, the student need only take the number of semester hours required for the student to complete the degree.

(4) The eligible postsecondary institution shall strive to complete the evaluation of a student's previous postsecondary transcript or transcripts and to establish the degree plan as quickly as possible, but no later than one (1) month after the student's application to TSAC for award of the scholarship; provided, that the student provides the student's previous postsecondary transcript or transcripts and makes the request for evaluation of the transcript or transcripts within five (5) business days after filing the application for the scholarship. A student who fails to provide the student's previous postsecondary transcript or transcripts within five (5) business days after filing the application for the scholarship shall be ineligible for the scholarship.

(5) The eligible postsecondary institution shall file a written copy of the degree plan with TSAC immediately after finalizing the plan. With the permission of the student, the copy may be transmitted electronically to TSAC.

(c) To be eligible for a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, a student shall not be required to meet any academic standard at the time of enrollment in the eligible postsecondary institution; except that, under the student's degree plan, the

student shall be mathematically able at the time of enrollment to achieve the grade point average required for graduation with the degree sought.

(d) To continue to be eligible for a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, a student shall:

(1) Maintain continuous enrollment at the eligible postsecondary institution at which the student established the degree plan;

(2) Take at least the number of semester hours of coursework that is required under the degree plan and that is in compliance with subdivision (b)(3) in each semester of enrollment;

(3) Make satisfactory academic progress toward graduation with the degree sought according to the student's degree plan and as determined by the eligible postsecondary institution at which the student is enrolled; and

(4) Reapply for the scholarship at any time specified by TSAC.

(e) If a student ceases to be eligible for the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship at any time for any reason, then the student shall not be able to regain the scholarship.

(f)

(1) A student may receive a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship under this section until the occurrence of the first of the following events:

(A) The student has earned the degree sought under the degree plan;

(B) The student has attempted the total number of semester hours required to receive the degree under the degree plan; or

(C) The amount of time set in the degree plan for receipt of the degree has passed.

(2) A Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship student who has an approved medical or personal leave of absence from the eligible postsecondary institution may continue to receive the scholarship upon resuming the student's education at the eligible postsecondary institution; provided, that the student continues to meet all applicable eligibility requirements. A medical or personal leave of absence under this subdivision (f)(2) shall be approved by the institutional review panel. A student who takes an approved leave of absence shall be eligible for the scholarship until the occurrence of the first of the following events:

(A) The student has earned the degree sought under the degree plan;

(B) The student has attempted the total number of semester hours required to receive the degree under the degree plan; or

(C) The sum of the time the student received the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship before the leave of absence and after the leave of absence equals the amount of time that is specified in the degree plan for receipt of the degree.

(g) Notwithstanding subdivision (d)(1), a student who receives a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship and attends an eligible postsecondary institution may transfer to another eligible postsecondary institution without loss of the scholarship; provided, that:

(1) The student continues to meet all requirements for the scholarship;

(2) The student applies and is admitted to the eligible postsecondary institution to which the student seeks to transfer;

(3) Prior to the student's transfer, the student and the eligible postsecondary institution to which the student seeks to transfer establish a degree plan at that institution as required by subdivision (b)(2). The sum of the semester hours the student attempted at the institution from which the student transfers plus the semester hours required to finish the degree at the institution to which the student transfers shall not exceed sixty (60) semester hours. The sum of the time the student attended the institution from which the student transfers plus the time required to finish the degree at the institution to which the student transfers shall not exceed the limits of subdivision (b)(2); and

(4) The student reapplies for the scholarship or notifies TSAC of the transfer as required by TSAC.

(h) Subject to the amounts appropriated by the general assembly and any law relating to a shortfall in funds available for postsecondary financial assistance from the net proceeds of the state lottery, the amount of a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship shall be:

(1) If the student is attending an eligible public postsecondary institution, one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) the tuition and required fees for the semester at the eligible public postsecondary institution for the course load for which the student is enrolled; or

(2) If the student is attending an eligible independent postsecondary institution, one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the average tuition and required fees for the semester at the eligible independent postsecondary institution for the course load for which the student is enrolled or three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500), whichever is less.

(i) If the sum of all financial assistance, including a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, for which a student qualifies exceeds the institutionally defined total cost of attendance at the eligible postsecondary institution the student is attending, then the student's Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship shall be reduced so that the financial aid actually received by the student does not exceed the institutionally defined total cost of attendance.

(j)

(1) Notwithstanding § 49-4-903(a), TSAC shall award Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarships on a first come, first served basis; provided, however, that no more than a total of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) of net lottery proceeds shall be expended for Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarships during the life of the program.

(2) As students are awarded scholarships for the 2015-2016 academic year, TSAC shall estimate, based on the potential of each student to receive a scholarship in the 2016-2017 academic year, the amount of funding needed for the scholarship program after the 2015-2016 academic year. Once the sum of the amount of money needed to fund the scholarships in the 2015-2016 academic year and the amount estimated to be needed to fund scholarships subsequent to the 2015-2016 academic year reaches the total available funding of five million dollars (\$5,000,000), no additional scholarships shall be awarded for the 2015-2016 academic year. In determining the potential of students to receive scholarships in the 2016-2017 academic year and making its estimate of funding needed for the scholarship program beyond the 2015-2016 academic year, TSAC may account for such possibilities as students failing to maintain

continuing eligibility for the program and students dropping out of school before the occurrence of a terminating event under subsection (f).

(k) Only students obtaining Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarships during the 2015-2016 academic year shall be eligible to receive the scholarship in any academic year beyond the 2015-2016 academic year.

(l) The comptroller of the treasury, through the comptroller's office of research and education accountability, shall review and study the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship to determine the effectiveness of the program in encouraging and enabling students who completed at least one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the coursework for a baccalaureate or associate degree before dropping out of college for at least twelve (12) months to obtain a degree. The office of research and education accountability shall report its findings and conclusions to the speakers of the senate and house of representatives and the education committees of the senate and house of representatives before December 31, 2017.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-902, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated subdivision:

"Business day" means a day on which the eligible postsecondary institution's administrative offices are open for regular business;

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.